



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000**

*Five-state area accounts for more than 147 arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators*

NEW ORLEANS, La. – More than 140 of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in the five state areas of: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that arrests in the 20-month long effort have surpassed 5,000. Among those individuals arrested in this area are:

- Larry P. Mouton, a resident of Breaux Bridge, La., who was suspected of transmitting child pornography via the Internet. He pleaded guilty in federal court Dec. 22 to one count of child pornography.
- ICE agents in Fulton, Miss., also arrested Antonio Gomez-Garcia, a convicted child molester, in October 2004. Gomez-Garcia was convicted of fondling a juvenile.

Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative aimed at those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable.

“Sexual predators will be held accountable for their heinous crimes,” said Michael A. Holt, ICE New Orleans special agent-in-charge. “ICE will continue to work aggressively with U.S. Attorneys and local police departments to hold those accountable who prey on the most vulnerable in our society.”

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE’s mission to find and deport illegal aliens -- particularly those with criminal records, and reflects the agency’s traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

**Foreign National Child Predators:** More than 85 percent of the arrests in Operation Predator involve foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported.

**International Child Sex Tourists:** Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE's attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents have made 14 arrests, including the first 12 arrests, under the child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act.

**Human Smuggling & Trafficking of Children:** The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger.

**Internet Child Pornography:** Drawing on ICE's cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation's virtual borders. One massive investigation has resulted in more than 1,200 arrests worldwide and marks the first time the government has gone after the financial side of child pornography. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov). ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*